

**Penny Sharpe**

Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy  
Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage  
Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

**Media Release****Proposed amendment to Kosciuszko wild horse management**

**Monday, 7 August 2023**

The NSW Government is seeking feedback on a proposed amendment to the Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan. The proposed amendment would allow aerial shooting as an additional option for the control of wild horses alongside the existing methods such as trapping and rehoming, and ground shooting.

Kosciuszko National Park's ecosystems are under threat. There is widespread recognition of the urgent need to reduce numbers of wild horses to protect more than 30 native threatened species.

These include the critically endangered southern and northern corroboree frogs, the endangered mountain pygmy possum, the endangered Guthega skink and she-oak skink, the vulnerable broad-toothed rat, the critically endangered Kelton's leek orchid and blue-tongued greenhood, and the critically endangered fish stocky galaxias. Wild horses also erode and compact soil and reduce water quality in streams and wetlands.

Under the current Plan, the NSW Government is legally required to reduce the wild horse population to 3,000 in 32 per cent of the park by 30 June 2027. However, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service will not be able to meet that target using only the existing control methods.

The most recent count of wild horses in the park using global best practice and peer-reviewed methodology estimated there are between 14,501 and 23,535 horses across the park.

The ability to conduct aerial shooting as a control method, consistent with the highest animal welfare standards, could be an important addition to current techniques to reduce the wild horse population.

The community is encouraged to provide input on the proposed amendment until 11 September 2023.

A final decision will not be made until all feedback has been considered.

Further information is available [here](#).

**Quotes attributable to Minister for the Environment and Heritage Penny Sharpe:**

"Kosciuszko National Park is the largest national park in NSW. It has Australia's tallest mountains, rugged landscape and plants and animals found nowhere else in the world. It's one of the jewels of our national parks crown but it is in grave danger. Precious ecosystems and endangered native species and their habitats are at risk of extinction due to introduced animals, including wild horses.

"Recent reports show that without action, wild horses could tip threatened species to extinction. There are simply too many wild horses for the park to cope.

“NSW is not on track to meet the wild horse population target under the legislated Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan, which is why we must consider the introduction of aerial shooting, carried out by skilled, highly trained shooters to the highest animal-welfare standards.

“We have an obligation to save these native animals, but we only have a limited window of opportunity to do so. If they become extinct, they are lost forever.

“From members of the public to commercial park users, scientists to community leaders and business owners, the Government wants to hear your feedback on this proposed change.”

### **Background information:**

### **Threatened species in the Kosciuszko National Park:**

At least 32 NSW and Commonwealth-listed threatened species and four ecological communities are at risk from wild horses. They're considered vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered:

- **Ecological community**

- Alpine Sphagnum Bogs and Associated Fens
- White Box – Yellow Box – Blakely’s Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland
- Snowpatch Feldmark in the Australian Alps bioregion
- Montane Peatlands and Swamps of the New England Tableland, NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin, South East Corner, South Eastern Highlands and Australian Alps Bioregions

- **Animals**

- Stocky galaxias
- Northern Corroboree Frog
- Southern Corroboree Frog
- Alpine Tree Frog
- Guthega skink
- She-oak skink
- Mountain Pygmy Possum
- Broad-toothed Rat

- **Plants**

- *Caladenia montana*
- Mauve Burr-daisy *Calotis glandulosa*
- Max Mueller’s Burr-daisy *Calotis pubescens*
- Archer’s Carex *Carex archeri*
- Raleigh Sedge *Carex raleighii*
- Leafy Anchor Plant *Discaria nitida*
- Pale Golden Moths *Diuris ochroma*
- Clover Glycine *Glycine latrobeana*
- Pale Pomaderris *Pomaderris pallida*
- Rice Flower *Pimelea bracteata*
- *Prasophyllum bagoense*
- *Prasophyllum innubum*
- Kelton’s Leek Orchid *Prasophyllum keltonii*
- Kiandra Leek Orchid *Prasophyllum retroflexum*
- Alpine Greenhood *Pterostylis alpina*
- Slender Greenhood *Pterostylis foliata*
- Blue-tongued Greenhood *Pterostylis oreophila*

- Anemone Buttercup *Ranunculus anemoneus*
- Monaro Golden Daisy *Rutidosia leiolepis*
- Feldmark Grass *Rytidosperma pumilum*
- Perisher Wallaby-grass *Rytidosperma vickeryae*
- Alpine Sun-orchid *Thelymitra alpicola*
- Black-hooded Sun Orchid *Thelymitra atronitida*
- Swamp Everlasting, Swamp Paper Daisy *Xerochrysum palustre*

### Counting wild horses

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service undertakes annual horse population surveys in Kosciuszko National Park, using the international best practice method for accurately estimating the population of large mammals over wide geographic areas. These surveys are published online. The next survey is due to occur in October 2023.

The population of wild horses in the park at the time of the most recent survey (November 2022) was assessed to be 18,814, with a 95% confidence interval of 14,501 to 23,535.

On current trends, using the control methods approved under the current Plan, it is estimated that the population of horses on 30 June 2027 will still be more than 12,000.

### Current wild horse control methods

- Mustering and passive trapping and rehoming
  - Passive trapping sees horses enter traps of their own accord
  - In 2022 around 430 horses were rehomed from the park
- Mustering and passive trapping and transporting to a knackery or abattoir
- Ground shooting, including in trap yards

### Protecting the heritage value of wild horses

The Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan identifies the heritage value of sustainable wild horse populations in identified parts of the park.

The Plan requires 3,000 wild horses to be retained in 32% of the park to protect this heritage value.

The proposed amendment to the Plan does not change this requirement.

### Feedback on the draft amendment

Stakeholders including members of the public can provide a written submission via an online survey, online submission form, email or post. Public exhibition closes on 11 September 2023.

A proposed plan, representations from the public and a summary of these, any representations from the Secretary of the Department of Planning and Environment, National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council and Heritage Council of NSW, and any advice from the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Community Advisory Panel, will be provided to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage.

The Minister will consider the draft amending plan and whether to adopt it under the *Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018*.

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